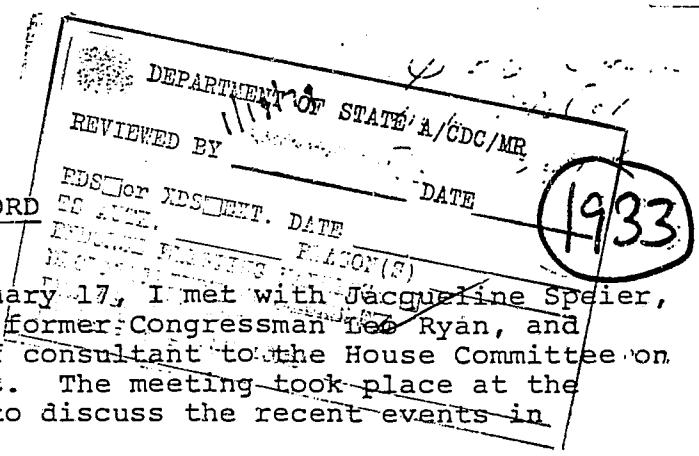

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

On Wednesday, January 17, I met with Jacqueline Speier, Legislative Counsel to former Congressman Leo Ryan, and James Schollaert, staff consultant to the House Committee on International Relations. The meeting took place at the request of Ms. Speier to discuss the recent events in Jonestown, Guyana.

Ms. Speier began the meeting by emphasizing that she had no desire to assign blame for the Jonestown tragedy, but felt strongly that there were a number of areas in which the Department's procedures and operations could be improved so as to minimize the possibility that a similar incident could occur in the future. She felt that the Ambassador should have been more involved in the Embassy's relationship with the People's Temple, and claimed that the Ryan visit marked the first time that the Ambassador had become fully aware of the extent of the problem. She felt that the Blakey affidavit, in particular, deserved more follow-up by the Department than it had received.

I explained the steps the Department is currently taking to examine the Jonestown tragedy and study changes that might profitably be made. I described the work being done by Ambassador Crimmins and Mr. Carpenter and our efforts to reevaluate the role of the consular corps in the protection of Americans overseas.

Ms. Speier stated that the information received by the CODEL from the Department prior to the trip was inadequate, and that it was her impression that the Department's interpretation of the Privacy Act had been consistently too strict. Three out of four of the meetings held between the CODEL staff and the Department had been requested by the Hill, and the discussions with the Department's legal staff had been particularly frustrating. Mr. Schollaert stated that the CODEL should have been given greater access to the Department's files and that there existed a great deal of unclassified information that would have been helpful. He mentioned the June cable from the Embassy to the Department as a particular example. "We went down," Ms. Speier concluded, "with virtually no information."

I expressed my understanding for the concerns that Speier and Schollaert had stated, and explained that this is a particularly difficult area in which to work since

the government should do everything in its power to protect Americans resident abroad while at the same time ensuring that legal and Constitutional rights are fully protected. Schollaert responded that he felt it might be advisable for the Department to consider taking stronger action in these instances where it appears likely that a crime has been committed. He also felt that there were broader problems in the coordination between CA and the geographic bureaus and in the low esteem in which most consular work is held by the Foreign Service.

I emphasized the Department's willingness and desire to work closely with the Congress in better understanding the implications of Jonestown, and offered to meet with Speier or Schollaert at any time in the future should they wish to do so.

Matthew Nimetz

cc: CA - Ms. Watson
H - Mr. Bennet
L - Mr. Marks
ARA - Amb. Vaky
C - Amb. Crimmins
ARA/CAR - Mr. McCoy

1/19/79